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## FINANCE PANEL APPROVES MEDICARE DRUG PRICE NEGOTIATION

*Committee sends Baucus amendment to full Senate for consideration next week*

**Washington, DC** – By a vote of 13 to eight, the Senate Finance Committee tonight approved Chairman Max Baucus’s plan to let the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) negotiate for lower drug prices in the Medicare prescription drug benefit. Baucus’s Chairman’s Mark amending S. 3, the Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act of 2007, is expected to be considered by the full Senate next week. In addition to striking the language in the 2003 Medicare Modernization Act that prohibits the HHS Secretary from interfering in price negotiations for the drug benefit, the mark also provides for greater transparency in drug pricing for the Medicare benefit, and seeks to give doctors and patients more information about the comparative effectiveness of drugs and other medical treatments.

**“From now on, when America’s seniors are paying too much for their medicines, every Health and Human Services Secretary can have an additional tool to help them,”** said Baucus. **“Tonight the Finance Committee made smart changes to the Medicare drug program. The Senate should seize the opportunity next week to exercise good judgment and make the drug benefit work even better for our seniors.”**

A summary of the original Chairman’s mark can be viewed on the legislation page of the Finance Committee website. Tonight, Baucus accepted a number of his Finance Committee colleagues’ amendments to the mark. Accepted amendments will:

- Permit the sharing of Medicare part D claims data with states (Rockefeller amendment)
- Require disclosure to Medicare beneficiaries of information about drug costs at point-of-sale (Bingaman amendment)
- Express the sense of the Senate on the need to revisit the asset test for determination of eligibility for the low-income subsidy (Grassley amendment)
- Express the sense of the Senate on the need to address pharmacy issues under the Medicare prescription drug benefit (Grassley amendment)
- Prohibit the Secretary from entering into a contract with an outside entity or an Inter-Department Agreement for the purposes of conducting government negotiation for prescription drug prices under part D (Hatch amendment)

Information on individual amendments can be obtained from sponsors’ offices.

The Chairman’s Mark is revenue-neutral.

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